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ABSTRACT

The role of academic chairpersons in the management of academic departments in Beijing, The People's Republic of China, is described. After a brief overview of social and political changes in China since 1949, the college teaching profession in China is discussed in terms of workload, salary, living conditions, the lack of individual choice in career matters, and the teacher as role model. The selection and qualifications of academic chairpersons are described, followed by a discussion of college administrative structure and the role of the academic chairperson in faculty morale and motivation, which is seen as a primary problem. The lack of faculty mobility, the handling of unproductive faculty, and motivation and compensation of senior faculty are discussed within the context of motivation. Lack of faculty participation in academic decision-making is also discussed. Nine references are listed. (KM)

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ACADEMIC CHAIRPERSONS AND THE MANAGEMENT OF ACADEMIC DEPARTMENTS IN CHINA

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This paper will describe the role of academic chairpersons in the management of academic departments in Beijing, China. The author was a visiting professor in the Department of English at Northern Jiaotong University in Beijing (March-June, 1987). He used this opportunity to study how academic departments are managed and how faculty are motivated through reward systems. This paper contrasts Chinese and American approaches.

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This paper will describe the role of academic chairpersons in the management of academic departments in Beijing, The People's Republic of China. During the spring quarter of 1987 (March-June), the author was a visiting professor in the Department of English at Northern Jiaotong University (located in Beijing). He used this opportunity to study how academic departments are managed and how faculty are motivated through reward systems. Such inquiry is relevant as there are many parallels between academic departments within both countries and comparison and contrast can provide enhanced understanding of various approaches.

Academic departments in The People's Republic of China have parallels with academic departments in the United States but there are marked differences. The management of academic departments in China is based on the unique development of that country.

In 1949, The People's Republic of China was established and for the next 30 years China was essentially a closed society to the outside world. There was limited interaction with other countries, and, thus, little knowledge of how foreign academic departments were managed. The only exception to this would be the Soviet academic system as China did maintain ties with the Soviet Union during this period.

Between 1966-1976, The People's Republic of China experienced a "cultural revolution." During this time education was criticized and changed drastically. Universities were shut down for the most part. Many administrators and intellectuals were taken from their positions and forced to work in the countryside in "re-education camps." All books were banned except for works by/about Chairman Mao (the Chinese leader at the time). Students were taught primarily about the basics of agriculture (i.e., planting and harvesting of crops). This period, which ended with the death of Chairman Mao, stunned the growth of education in China.

In 1979, an open door policy was implemented in an effort to help China compete with the outside world. Since that time, trade and joint business ventures with the west have been emphasized strongly, specifically with the United States. As interaction with the west increases, Chinese academic departments have worked to learn from practices of academic departments in the west. Each year, educational exchanges involving students, faculty, and administrators occur between China and the United States. The learning process is a two way street.

Higher education in China has shifted from academic approaches practiced in the Soviet Union and has begun to adopt practices used in the U.S. Thus, they are "trying to make their universities more

comprehensive institutions in which teaching and research are expected to reinforce one another" (Jacobsen, October 28, 1987, p. 41). The Soviet approach puts far more emphasis on research.

Northern Jiaotong University, in Beijing, exemplifies a typical university in China and the administration of its academic departments is consistent with government regulations. A brief description of the university structure, and the role of the academic chairpersons within this structure, will clarify some of the similarities and differences with university structures in the United States.

Faculty generally teach two semesters (17 weeks each) a year and teach roughly eight hours a week. Aside from teaching, some faculty will research teaching methods and subject areas which are pertinent to their expertise. Annual salaries vary between 1,000 to 1,800 yuan ($300 to $500) a year and annual bonuses equal about 25% of their salary. Salaries are the same at each level (instructor, assistant professor, associate professor, and full professor) but bonuses vary within each level. Thus, the bonus system is similar to the merit pay system in the U.S.

Single faculty live four to a room (about the size of a typical U.S. dormitory room) and they can be given their own room after about 5-6 years as a faculty member. Rent is minimal (proportionate to an American paying $5 U.S. a month). A retirement pension is provided by the government. Housing is based on position, age, marital status, and membership in the communist party.

It will be helpful to describe other aspects of academic life in China, before discussing the role of academic chairpersons, to provide a perspective of the environment within which universities operate. Key differences between the Chinese and U.S. systems deal with professors serving as role models and the selection of who will work as professors.

Teachers in China are expected to serve as role models in moral, as well as academic, development. In an article entitled "Teachers to Play Social Roles," Li Xingwan, vice-chairman of the Chinese Educational Workers' Union (CEWU), emphasizes the importance of moral development. He states "CEWU and its branches should encourage teachers to improve themselves and turn the younger generation into one devoted to socialism with high moral standards, academic knowledge and discipline" (Li Xing, 1987, p. 3).

Academic faculties stereotypically are overworked, underpaid, and living conditions are inferior. Thus, the teaching profession

is not as popular as it is in the U.S. For example, Yang Chuanwei, President of the Beijing Teachers College, reports the number of people who want to join academic faculties has dropped considerably. "Out of 802 students enrolled by the college last year, there were only 57 who had selected the college as their first choice for higher education" (Yang Chuanwei, 1987, p. 4).

The author conducted a written survey of students who were enrolled in the teachers training program at Northern Jiaotong University. Two questions from the survey solicited their opinions regarding teachers serving as role models and their placement in the teacher training program.

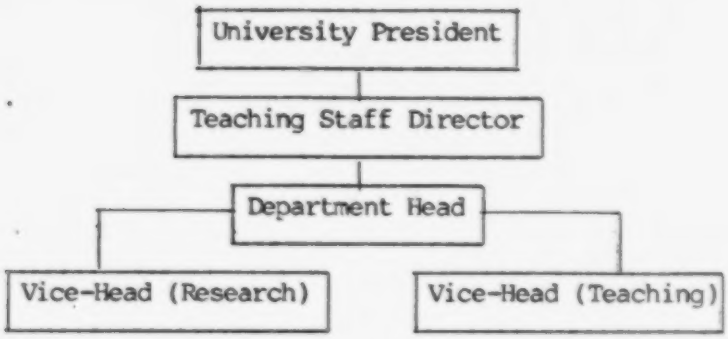
Twenty students were asked to respond to the following statements: 1) "As an english teacher, my behavior will serve as an important role model for my students regarding social responsibility" and 2) "Teaching english was my first choice over other types of jobs." They were asked to respond strongly agree (SA), agree (A), neutral (N), disagree (D), and strongly disagree (SD).

The following table indicates students responses.

	SA	A	N	D	SD
Question #1 (moral role model)	35%	45%	15%	5%	
Question #2 (selected teaching	20%	20%		35%	35%

Thus, the environment within which Chinese and U.S. academic chairpersons work does differ.

Academic chairpersons are appointed by the university president. No evaluation is done by superiors or subordinates. Primary criteria for selection is based on position (associate or full professor) and productivity in research. A faculty member must have at least a B.A. degree before being promoted to Associate Professor. The following graph provides a description of the university chain of command.



F - A - C - U - L - T - Y

The Department of English at Northern Jiaotong University exemplifies a typical department within the university. There are forty faculty members who teach graduate and undergraduate courses. Primary courses of instruction deal with english as a major area of study and english as a second language (a minor area of study). The department currently has 150 english majors and 1200 students studying english as a second language.

The morale and motivation of faculty, and the role of the academic chairperson in these processes, is a unique situation compared to the United States. Faculty members "belong" to their universities for life. They cannot change occupations or move to another university without strong connections in the central government. They also cannot be fired by the academic chairperson. Faculty appointments are in effect until mandatory retirement at the age of 60.

With such a system, many Chinese universities have a very low student-faculty ratio. At Beijing University the ratio is about 4 to 1 (Jacobsen, October 28, 1987, p. 42). Lao Ze Yi, President of West China University of Medical Sciences, states "If they do a good job or don't do a good job, they still keep their positions.... We can't fire anybody" (Jacobsen, October 28, 1987, p. 42).

Faculty can move around within a department though. For instance, they can teach undergraduate or graduate students, required or elective courses, and they can focus more on teaching or research (depending upon the needs of the department). Academic chairpersons have direct control over such moves.

Motivation of faculty is seen as a primary problem. Often the more seniority a faculty member has the less likely he/she will be

productive beyond teaching his/her assigned classes. Academic chairpersons can refer those who need motivation to the university Head of Propaganda and encourage them to attend weekly political meetings so they might learn more about the "socialist struggle."

In more serious cases, an unproductive faculty member will go through a series of warnings. First, the unproductive faculty member will be counseled by the academic chairperson. Second, if no improvement is exhibited, he/she will be criticized in writing by the academic chairperson. Third, and only in unusual situations, the faculty member will be penalized financially at the direction of the university administration.

In general terms, the motivation for faculty members to be productive is described as follows. The motivation for younger faculty members is to move up within the academic ranks of the department. This can be achieved by teaching extra courses and serving on committees within the university. Research productivity is more of a consideration in some of the positions. The benefits of such efforts include better housing, higher pay, and aspirations for promotion.

The motivation for older faculty members is a major problem. With pay levels fixed, faculty who have reached higher levels of seniority tend to seek money from sources outside the university. If they can work outside of the university, and not have it reported to the university, they can keep all the money. If the university knows of the employment it will receive up to 50% of the additional salary. Thus, older faculty will generally try to teach as little as possible in the university but work as much as possible (off the record) outside of the university. Thus, junior faculty members tend to shoulder more duties within the academic departments.

Promotion of faculty is approved by a research group committee in each department. This committee is comprised of four senior ranking department members. The request for promotion is initiated by the research group committee and "rubber stamp" approval generally follows from the university promotion committee and the Ministry of Railway. Northern Jiaotong University is governed by the Ministry of Railway.

The author readily observed the aforementioned processes during his teaching assignment. By U.S. standards it would seem junior faculty would resent this process but, on the contrary, junior faculty know they will someday be able to enjoy the aforementioned liberties when they are senior faculty.

This situation is obviously a problem for academic chairpersons to work with. They have control over faculty members well being within the academic department but little, if any, control over faculty pay and termination.

In another area faculty governance, by faculty and academic chairpersons, is far less existent compared to the U.S. Zhao Yuguang (not his real name) reports he feels frustrated by restrictions on faculty participation in academic decision making. They are free to express opinions when "alone in the classroom" with students but he reports they have "virtually no say in departmental affairs." He says they don't discuss at university meetings. "There is a speaker. I only have to bring my ears" (Jacobsen, November 4, 1987, p. A-48).

The impact of the cultural revolution (1966-1976) on higher education in China cannot be understated. It seems to provide a constant referent in China's educational development. One will hear "because of the cultural revolution..., before the cultural revolution..., since the cultural revolution..., or during the cultural revolution...." (Jacobsen, November 4, 1987, p. A-49). Due to it's recency, the cultural revolution has affected everyone at all levels of higher education in China. As time passes perhaps the effects of the cultural revolution, and the persecution of higher education, will diminish.

The Chinese educational system, and the society as a whole, is developing rapidly. As international exchanges continue to occur with the United States, in the private and academic sectors, this author is very optimistic regarding the benefits which can be realized by both countries. Although China is adopting many of our technologies and practices, the United States can learn by comparing and contrasting our processes with those practiced in other cultures.

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